

## **What is a VPN- Virtual Private Network**

When most of us think of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) we think of large corporations using them to provide their employees secure remote access to the corporate network and its resources. Well folks, VPNs aren't just for big business users anymore. Home users can also take advantage of the great security features provided by VPNs.

### **Why would you want to use a Personal VPN service?**

A personal [VPN](#) service can create a huge roadblock for hackers trying to access your computer. This roadblock is basically a wall of strong [encryption](#) that protects all the network traffic entering or leaving your computer. This thwarts a hacker's ability to perform network eavesdropping and man-in-the-middle type attacks.

**Having a personal VPN service also has several other benefits associated with it:**

#### **1. Anonymous Browsing**

One of the coolest features of a personal VPN service is [anonymous browsing](#). Since you use intermediate VPN servers to connect to the internet, the websites you visit can't see your true IP address. They can only see the address of the VPN proxy server that you are connected to. Most VPN services allow you to switch this IP address multiple times per month and many will switch it for you automatically every so often.

This doesn't give you a free pass to commit crimes or visit illegal sites as digital forensics type folks could still track you down and potentially subpoena ISP and VPN service provider records to see your actions.

#### **2. Access your home country's network as if you were in the country**

If you travel abroad a lot then you know that browsing sites that are located in your home country can be difficult because some countries filter traffic based on geographical location of the IP address that you are using.

Some sites are blocked entirely. Music and video sites may be blocked due to country specific license agreements. VPN use of an IP from your home country may possibly allow you to access content as if you were in your home country. This may more may not be permitted depending on the content providers policies.

#### **3. Encrypted connection prevents eavesdropping**

Have you ever been at a coffee shop and saw a creepy looking guy with a laptop? He could be using special software to eavesdrop on anyone in the area who is using the

wide-open in store Wi-Fi. Since most hotspots do not use wireless encryption it's easy for him to jack your connection and see what you are up to.

Most VPN services allow you to encrypt your traffic when traveling with your mobile devices so that everything you do is encrypted and private, even when you're on an open public Wi-Fi hotspot.

## **How do you obtain and setup a VPN service?**

### **1. Choose a service provider.**

There are tons of VPN service providers out there. Some of the more well-known ones include: [StrongVPN](#), [OverPlay](#), and [WiTopia](#) to name a few. Prices of services can vary widely and range from about \$5 to \$20 or more per month. Check out user reviews to see the pros and cons of each before selecting one. Some key factors to consider, are speed, availability of bandwidth, VPN server locations, etc.

### **2. Install and configure the service provider's VPN client**

Your service provider may have client software that you install on your computer in order to use their VPN service. They may also provide you with configuration details on how to setup VPN on mobile devices (if provider supports this). Some providers will even allow you to install their VPN service directly on your VPN-capable wireless router. Installation at the router level is probably one of the best solutions for home use because the router performs all the encryption and decryption which frees up computer resources for other tasks. Another benefit of VPN service installed at the router is that all your devices won't have to be specially configured to use the VPN. They won't even know that they are running through a VPN.

The one main downside of using a VPN is the delay associated with the encryption / decryption process. Websites might not be as lightening fast to load up as they were before you added the VPN service. It's up to you whether the delay is acceptable or not. Most VPN services offer free trials so you can try before you buy.

#### **Related Articles**

- [VPN Services with Access to International IP Addresses](#)
- [10 Reasons to Use a VPN for Private Web Browsing](#)
- [VPN Troubleshooting Guide - Quick Tips for Remote Workers](#)
- [VPN Solutions - What Is a VPN?](#)
- [The 15 Best VPN Service Providers, 2013](#)